

Sister Laura Hughes Conversion Story

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Interviewed & recorded by the

Westfield 2nd Ward Temple and Family History Committee

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I am a convert, and I grew up in an awesome family, but my family didn't have a religion, didn't believe in anything particular. My dad was agnostic ... I grew up with not knowing God or who he was. And I thought back then, when I was a little girl, my dad's a good man, an amazing man, but he did swear. ... They ... used the Lord's name in vain, and I thought Jesus was a swear word when I was a little girl ... So anyway, as a little girl, I did not know who I was, where I came from. I mean, I knew who I was, I was Laura Bischoff, but I just was confused. You know, ... I'd see things and I'd wonder, "Why? Why are we here?"

... I was very drawn to flowers. I thought they were so pretty, and the ocean and the mountains and ladybugs ... I just thought they were so wonderful and pretty ... but how did they get here? Why are they here? And I had no answers. ...

I can remember going down to a friend's house down the street, and they had in their house ... a man on this plaque, and he was strapped to a cross, and he was bloody. And I thought, why would you hang that in your house? That scared me. I had no clue why that was there. I had no understanding.

... We moved from LA ... to the Sacramento area in California. ... My dad worked for the state of California. ... One of his coworkers, who happened to be a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter day Saints, ... being a good member of the church and a missionary, thought, "I'll tell this man about our religion ... he doesn't seem to believe anything ... I'll teach him." ... His name was Rowan Cecil, and Rowan tried to teach my dad, and it was a long process. As he put it, he was a "hard nut to crack." ... He had a lot of questions.

... Back up the story ... when I was little, my favorite aunt died and her name was Rosemary. It was my dad's sister, and we called her Aunt Bebo. ... She had passed and I did not understand what this process was all about. All I knew is that my aunt was gone, and I went to this funeral, and then they went and buried her in the ground. And in my mind's eye as a little first grader, I had no clue. It was scary. I thought, "That's it? She's buried under this dirt and that's it?" ... It was frightening, it was scary, and it broke my heart because I thought, "That's it to life. It's over." And so I tried not to think about that as a little girl because it boggled my brain and it made me cry, and because I didn't want to be buried and just left in the dirt ...

And so, back down to Sacramento and I'm 11 years old there ... this gentleman is trying to teach my dad, and it took, probably a year and a half or two years to get my dad moving and thinking about this. ... It brought up a lot of questions to my dad and, and this poor brother, he just ...had to research. He had to do a lot in answering my dad's questions. And then my dad finally agreed to have the missionaries come. And so the missionaries came to our home. ... Of course, my dad fired a lot of questions at him. ... I can remember sitting there and I was 12 ... listening to these elders speak and share some stories, and they began to share the story of the plan of salvation. ... All of a sudden a light just went on in my head ... I do belong somewhere! I have a place I came from. I'm not just a blob of cells and whatever floating on this earth. There is a purpose. And that I had a Heavenly Father and a Heavenly Mother. And I had ... Jesus Christ, an elder brother that was all part of a heavenly plan and a Heavenly Father and a heavenly family. ...My mind was just going crazy like, woo hoo! ... I belong, I have something, I'm just not a nothing! And then they talked more about the plan of salvation, ... birth and then death. And then I was like, "my Bebo's alive! She's not dead! She is up in heaven." ...My mom and dad and everybody's just sitting there. My dad's asking all these questions, and I'm like, what is wrong with you people? Did you not just hear what they said?!

...The other story that really touched my heart as a 12 year old was hearing about Joseph Smith, a young man who had questions. He wanted answers. And he got them. And I thought, "he's just a couple years older than me ... he was able to communicate and hear and receive answers in helping in restoring the church for the Lord Jesus Christ." ... That really spoke to me and touched my heart and I thought ... I can pray. I have a place to pray and talk to Heavenly Father and Jesus and Heavenly Mother up there that will listen and hear me and help me understand and grow in this new gospel of learning about Jesus Christ. And it was the most exciting thing as a 12 year old, to feel that and to experience it ... It's still huge for me as a 69 year old lady, to know who I am, to know that I'm a daughter of God. Forever and always. And that I have a brother in Jesus Christ, and that he's there for me, he loves me, and he has been with me all along. Even as a little girl wondering why we were here. I can remember laying on the grass ... in kindergarten. I was looking up in the sky and I saw all the clouds and I just was in amazement of, "how are those up there? How is this all created?" And I would think those things off and on ... I finally had to get to a point where I was like, "I can't think about them anymore. It boggles my brain. I have no answers. I can't figure it out." And all those answers came when those missionaries came to our home and they were able to teach my family.

They were able to teach my dad, my mom, who embraced the gospel 100% and changed their lives. ... My mom and dad ... were smokers, and my dad was able to embrace that word of wisdom. ... My mom did embrace it, but she did not stop until the morning, the day that we got baptized. And then when she got baptized that day, she had no more desire or need to feel to smoke a cigarette. It was gone. And that was one of her struggles ... "how do I give this up? I've smoked for so long," and of course you become addicted to it. ... but she did not ever ... feel a need for it after she came out of the water. ... When you were baptized, that feeling when you come up out of the water, that feeling ... for me ... was freshness and clean, a cleanliness and just a brand new me. And they sang a song that touched my heart at that baptism, and it was a primary song ... I am a Child of God.

... That song has power. Lead me, guide me, stand beside me, help me find my place. And he did. He watched over me as a little girl. Even though I didn't know Him, I know He was there. I learned what those feelings were when I became a member of the church, and those feelings I had as a little girl with a tender spirit of a loving heavenly Father and a loving brother, watching over me and watching over my family and helping us find our way. ... One of my first prayers as a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter day Saints was ... "Thank you for helping me find our way and not forgetting us and helping us know who we are, and providing missionaries that shared the truthfulness of the gospel and helped me and my family come back to the family fold of our Heavenly Father and to be in an eternal family."

... A year later we were sealed. My parents were sealed as husband and wife forever and ever, and my brother and I were sealed to them forever and ever. And it was the most amazing, wonderful experience to be in the temple. ... My brothers and I had to be in the nursery with these other little kids. We had to go in there and wait our turn before they brought us into the sealing room to be sealed to our parents. ... It was the Oakland Temple in California, something that will be remembered forever and always. And so, my sweet brothers and sisters, remember who you are, and write down your own conversion story.

It's important. You need to see it. You need to remember it. You need to be able to read it and see it. ... Being born in the church is amazing and wonderful. But you still have to be converted and have your own conversion story of being a true member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter day Saints. And I am grateful that I now know who that man was on that plaque, even though it was a little ... gruesome ... But I understand the story behind it now, and all that he did for us and the suffering that he went through for us. ... It's touched my heart then, and it continues to touch my heart. I'm grateful for my Savior, Jesus Christ, and I'm grateful for his atoning love for each of us. And I'm grateful that I know he knows you. ... he's there for us. And I leave that with you. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.